



THE DILA SIGNPOST WINTER '10

from The Executive Director's Desk

By Jennifer Whitcomb, Executive Director



This issue of The DILA Sign Post you now hold in your hands will be our last printed newsletter mailed to you. After much discussion and debate, we have decided to transition to an electronic format. Moving forward, all issues of the newsletter will be e-mailed. Please e-mail dila@dila.org to ensure we have your name and e-mail address so you don't miss an issue.

An e-newsletter conserves resources and allows readers with laptops and handheld devices like BlackBerry phones and iPhones to access our newsletter on the go. And of course you always have the option to print out The DILA Sign Post on your home printer if you choose. For those without access to e-mail or internet, printed copies will be available in our lobby.

In other news, DILA is the proud recipient of a Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) grant to assist individuals with hearing loss with their employment goals. This grant will support our job seeking skills classes and job development, placement and coaching services, all of which are in high demand.

Two recent awards have given DILA even more to celebrate! For the second year in a row, DILA has received the Best of Salisbury Award for Social Services from the U.S. Local Business Association. In August 2009, the Lower Shore Workforce Alliance presented DILA with an award for our continued support of its Summer Youth Work Program in Wicomico County.

And here's another reason to celebrate: your continued support. Without it, we would be unable to provide such a diverse array of services to community members in need.

P.S. – Be sure to save the date for DILA's Camp Adventure 2010, scheduled for August 19 to August 22.

Keep checking our Web site, www.dila.org, for details!

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Laura Jones, *Administrative Assistant*
Lisa Trolian, *Office Coordinator*
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Todd Morrison, *Independent Living Advisor*
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Chuck Thomas, *Independent Living Advisor*
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Eddy Morrison, *Communication Specialist*
Will Chambers, *Driver*
John Handy, *Driver*
Richard Hudson, *Driver*

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INTERNS

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Deaf Independent Living Association, established in 1982, is a 501 (c) 3 non profit organization. A volunteer Board of Directors governs the agency of approximately 25 staff members, fluent in American Sign Language. Office is located in Salisbury, MD serving the Eastern Shore's nine counties and Delaware. DILA continues to serve as a transitional program between home, employment and education for individuals who are deaf or have a hearing loss.

DILA Honored for Community Outreach

by Laura Jones, Administrative Assistant



Two organizations honored DILA last year for our outstanding commitment to the community. In July 2009, DILA received the Best of Salisbury Award for Social Services from the U.S. Local Business Association (USLBA) for the second year in a row! The USLBA's award program recognizes local businesses throughout the country that exemplify exceptional commitment and service to their customers and communities. Winners are chosen based on information compiled by USLBA and other third parties. Only two percent of all 2008 USBLA award winners were honored again in 2009.

In August 2009, the Lower Shore Workforce Alliance presented DILA with an award for our continued support of its Summer Youth Work Program in Wicomico County. A division of the Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland, the Lower Shore Workforce Alliance provides policy and oversight for Workforce Investment Act funds and programs.

DILA Partners with United States Census Bureau

by Laura Jones, Administrative Assistant

DILA has partnered with the United States Census Bureau as a host site for the 2010 Census.

We encourage all deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals to complete the census questionnaire, which will be mailed or hand delivered in March to every household in the United States. Census information is important for many reasons: it determines how more than \$400 billion dollars of federal funding each year is spent on infrastructure and services, such as hospitals, schools, roads and tunnels and job training centers. It also affects the number of seats your state occupies in the United States House of Representatives and plays a role in disease prevention, employment and other public concerns.

The census survey consists of just ten questions and takes approximately ten minutes to complete. Any personal data you provide is kept confidential. DILA will offer special assistance for those who need help completing their census form. Just stop by our office in Salisbury Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and a staff member will be happy to assist you. You can also return your census form by placing it in our drop box.



For more information about the 2010 census, visit www.2010census.gov.

Employment Services Update

by Mary Jo Verdery, Employment Director

Great news on the employment services front! DILA has been awarded a Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) grant to assist individuals with hearing loss with their employment goals. More specifically, the grant is earmarked for job seeking skills classes, along with job development, placement and coaching. DILA is thrilled to be able to serve greater numbers of hard-of-hearing job seekers in our community.

Since receiving the grant, DILA has assisted with a successful job placement for a consumer at Blind Industries and Services of Maryland and gained support from several local employers.

In other news, DILA continues to serve individuals in Delaware's Kent and Sussex Counties by providing job seeking skills classes, job development and placement. Being able to assist Delaware residents enables DILA to reach over 90 percent of individuals with hearing loss living on the Eastern Shore. Currently, DILA provides employment services to 50 consumers, 16 of whom are employed.

DILA's job seeking skills classes are filling quickly! Designed to teach all the necessary skills for seeking and securing employment, the class also helps participants approach job interviews with confidence and informs them of their rights in the workplace as outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act.

To learn more about the class or for general information about DILA's Employment Services, call 410-742-5052 (voice/TTY), 443-365-2647 (VP) or visit www.dila.org.



Disney Dreams Realized

By Celeste Emerson,
Independent Living Advisor

After years of planning, saving and dreaming, this past November a group of DILA consumers traveled to Walt Disney World for five magical days! Many squeals of delights were heard as our plane touched down in Orlando, Florida.

From touring Cinderella's castle and visiting Epcot's countries to enjoying a Hawaiian luau and blasting into outer space on a Star Wars ride, our trip was packed with fun and adventure. Our day of departure came too soon as we sadly packed our bags and souvenirs. Fond memories of time spent at "The Happiest Place on Earth" gave us much comfort—and laughter—on the plane ride home. Who knows where our next trip will take us?

DILA Hosts Advisory Council and Town Hall Meeting for Governor's Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

by Mary Jo Verdery, Employment Director

On December 1, 2009, the Governor's Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODDH) held its Advisory Council meeting at DILA followed by a Town Hall discussion. Over 40 people gathered to learn more about the ODDH's advocacy efforts for individuals with hearing loss. Attendees were taught how to self-advocate and file a complaint if necessary.



Winter Weather Tips

By Marlena Turner, DIR Manager

Don't wait until the snow starts falling to prepare for winter weather! Prepping your home and car in advance for winter emergencies will help keep your family safe and healthy when severe weather strikes. Just follow these tips:

At home:

- Keep alternative heat sources such as propane and kerosene on hand in case of power outages (follow directions for proper use to avoid fire or carbon monoxide poisoning). Remember, power outages during heavy storms can last hours or even days.
- Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors on every floor of your home. Purchase a fire extinguisher if you don't already own one.
- Dress in layers and monitor your body temperature. Children and the elderly are especially sensitive to cold weather. If it gets too cold, head to a shelter or stay with family or friends.
- Stock enough canned or ready-to-eat food to last several days. Be sure to have a handheld can opener available.
- Keep several gallons of water on hand for drinking and hygiene.
- Purchase flashlights, batteries and a weather radio for emergencies.
- People with special medical needs, such those on supplemental oxygen, should notify emergency services during a power outage.
- Use ice melt on outside stairs and walkways (works best if applied prior to a storm).

In your car:

- Avoid driving in poor weather; instead, wait until roads are cleared.
- Keep plenty of blankets and warm clothing in your car in case you become stranded.
- Make sure your cell phone is charged and in good working order before heading out.
- Store jumper cables, ice scrapers and flares in your car.
- Check your vehicle's fluid levels and tire treads regularly.
- Keep a small container of sand or cat litter to use for traction if your vehicle gets stuck in snow or ice.

For more weather preparation tips, visit www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter.

Interpreter Requests Show No Signs of Slowing

By Lisa Trolian, Office Coordinator

DILA is on track for meeting (and possibly exceeding) the 1,000 interpreter requests recorded in fiscal year 2009 (July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2009). For the first five months of fiscal year 2010, DILA had 435 interpreter requests. Our average monthly fill rate is 79 percent.

DILA continues to recruit contractual interpreters. If interested, please call 410-742-5052. Our goal is a 100 percent fill rate!

HUD Housing Available in DIR

by Marlena Turner, DIR Manager

Deaf Independent Residences, Inc. (DIR) has a three-bedroom Section 8/202 home available in Easton for disabled or elderly individuals to share. Another three-bedroom Section 8/202 home in Berlin will be available starting in April. For more information and/or an application, contact Marlena Turner, DIR manager, at marlena.turner@dila.org or 410-742-5052, ext. 125.



Habitat for Humanity *Home Dedicated*

by Laura Jones, Administrative Assistant

Deaf community members, Ernie Hutto and Fawn Seawell are officially homeowners! Ernie and Fawn moved into their home in November 2009, and Habitat for Humanity, which helped with building efforts, held a special dedication ceremony on December 14, 2009. This is the first handicap-accessible home built by Habitat in our area. Special thanks were given to all who helped make this home possible, especially the Lions Clubs and Rotary Clubs. DILA wishes Ernie and Fawn many happy memories in their new home.



Video Relay Services (VRS) Available at DILA

DILA has a Sorenson Video Relay Service (VRS) videophone available to the public during business hours, Monday-Friday from 9am-5pm.

A free service, VRS enables sign language users to communicate in their native language via video conferencing. During a VRS call, a professionally trained video relay interpreter translates the user's sign language or text for the other (hearing) party. When the other person responds, the operator translates his or her words back into sign language for the VRS user.



Stop by DILA's Deaf Resource Library

By Eddy Morrison,
Communication Specialist

DILA's Deaf Resource Library and Sign Lab are open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information on library materials, including books, DVDs and VHS tapes, contact Eddy Morrison at 410-742-5052 (voice/TTY) or e-mail dila@dila.org. Happy reading and viewing!

FREE SERVICES for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Maryland's Eastern Shore Residents

by Laura Jones, Administrative Assistant

Need help communicating with your boss or coworkers? Trouble understanding your Social Security benefits? Need an interpreter or transportation to and from work or doctor's appointments? Confused about EEOC, ADA and DOJ compliance? DILA can help!

Our qualified staff offers FREE assistance to Eastern Shore of Maryland residents who are deaf or hard of hearing. Services provided include advocacy, employment assistance, benefits management, transportation, help accessing community resources, money management, housing and more. For more information, stop by our office at 806 Snow Hill Road in Salisbury, call 410-742-5052 (voice/TTY) or e-mail dila@dila.org.

ASL Classes at DILA

by Eddy Morrison, Communication Specialist

DILA offers an expanded American Sign Language (ASL) Program throughout the year to include ASL I, II and III courses, along with classes for children. All classes will be taught by Eddy Morrison, DILA's communication specialist.

ASL courses include plenty of student/teacher interaction with a focus on language, grammar, comprehension and deaf culture. Please note that class size is limited and enrollment is on a first-come, first-served basis. We urge you to register early to guarantee your seat. Nearly 30 students registered for DILA's ASL classes last fall! For future dates and times please call 410-742-5052 (voice/TTY), 1-866-947-6923 (VP), email dila@dila.org or visit www.dila.org/events.php.





DILA's "Mystery Van" a Hit at 2009 Trunk or Treat

by Celeste Emerson, Independent Living Advisor

DILA consumers dressed for the occasion at Cross Pointe's 2009 Trunk or Treat! Our theme was "Mystery Van"; our very own Rodney Walker drew a remarkable poster of the Scooby Doo van and other consumers and staff donated accessories to complete our look. DILA consumers also distributed Halloween treats to the many costumed children who stopped by our "van" for a visit!

DILA Participates in Worcester County's Diversity Summit

by Eddy Morrison, Communication Specialist

On November 2, 2009, Maryland's Worcester County held its second annual Diversity Summit. Jointly sponsored by the county's Board of Education, LMB Cultural Competency Committee and Department of Social Services/LEP Committee, the conference covered a wide range of topics and included a presentation on deaf culture by DILA.

The summit helped attendees increase their cultural awareness and sensitivity. Feedback on the summit was very positive.

Save the Date for Summer Fun!

by Eddy Morrison, Communication Specialist

DILA's Camp Adventure 2010 will take place August 19 to August 22. This year's three-night, four-day (one more day than 2009!) camp will be packed with fun-filled activities, including fishing, hiking, canoeing, campfires, swimming, crafts and more.

Camp Adventure is open to deaf and hard-of-hearing children and their siblings (ages 5 – 17). More information about this year's camp, including registration details, will be announced soon. We will also post information on our Web site, www.dila.org.



The DILA Sign Post Going Green

by Laura Jones, Administrative Assistant

This issue of The DILA Sign Post will be our last printed edition. In an effort to conserve resources and be more mindful of our environment, future newsletters will be distributed via e-mail. To add your e-mail address to our mailing list, please e-mail dila@dila.org; call 410-742-5052 (voice/TTY) or 443-365-2647 (VP).

DILA THANKS ...*Our Recent Donors*

GOLD SPONSORSHIP \$20,000 - \$29,999

City of Salisbury, Community Development Block Grant –
towards the Employment Program

SILVER SPONSORSHIP \$10,000 - \$19,999

John Ben Snow Memorial Trust - towards repairs of DIR houses

Maryland Home and Community Care Foundation –
towards community ADA workshops

The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation – towards general support of core services

BRONZE SPONSORSHIP \$5,000 – \$9,999

Anonymous – towards General Operating

COPPER SPONSORSHIP \$1,000 - \$4,999

George B. Todd Fund of the Mid-Shore Community Foundation –
towards Employment Services for Dorchester County residents

Quota International of Cambridge, MD –

towards Employment Services for Dorchester County residents

FRIENDS \$500 - \$999

AmeriGroup Foundation – towards technology

John & Sharan Allen – towards Sign to Succeed

SUPPORTERS \$25 - \$499

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Eddy Morrison

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Diana Price

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Salisbury B.P.O. Elks Lodge #817

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Marlena Turner

Mary Jo Verdery

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Joy Carney

Coke Cola Enterprises, Inc.

Laura Jones

Sam's Club #6383

Laurie VanSciver

SIGN TO SUCCEED CAMPAIGN

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POHANKA PAYS IT FORWARD DESIGNEES

Michaeline Brackett

Thomas and Anne Brown

Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Green

Mary Jo Verdery



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UPCOMING EVENTS

visit our website @ www.dila.org

Unless otherwise noted, all events will take place at DILA's office in Salisbury, located at 806 Snow Hill Rd.
For more information on all events, call 410-742-5052 (V/TTY), 1-866-947-6923 (VP) or visit www.dila.org/events

Job Seeking Skills Classes

Mon. - Fri., April 5-30, 2010

10 am - 2 pm (Bring Lunch)

Transportation available upon request

Census Day 2010

April 1, 2010

Complete & return the Census 2010 form

DILA's Camp Adventure

Camp Pecometh, Centreville, MD

August 19-22, 2010